

The Metamorphosis of Social Movements into Political Parties during Democratic Transition Processes. A Comparison of Egyptian and Tunisian Movements and Parties.

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Abstract

Social Movements play a crucial role in the process of democratic transformation. They are the driving force in challenging authoritarianism. It is less recognized that SMs are also the fundamental building blocks for emerging political parties. While there is a significant body of work on the role of SMs in ending authoritarianism, there is little systematic research on either successful or indeed failed transitions into parties.

Focusing on the transitions in Egypt and Tunisia following the Arab Spring, the paper studies newly established political parties with roots in SM activism, including Islamists and those on the secular spectrum. The aim is to observe whether and to what degree SMs develop formal boundaries which mark their institutionalization into independent parties. Although Goldstone pointed out that the differentiation between SMs and political parties is in any case 'fuzzy', the paper argues that the formation of formal boundaries is in fact essential to the success of the democratic transition process. The failure of democratic transition in Egypt in July 2013, to which pro-democratic movements and new political parties contributed, demonstrates this fact. The Tunisian case shows a more comprehensive metamorphosis of SMs into political parties, thus enabling a relatively structured process of transition.

Tags: Social Movement Theory; social movements; political parties; democratic transition; authoritarianism; Arab Spring; Middle East; Egypt; Tunisia

Introduction

The Arab Spring gives a new impetus to the discussion of democratisation in the Middle East. Although the venture to replace authoritarian regimes with democratic governments has largely failed, the short period when 'the people' pushed forward to call for the installation of democratic structures presents us with persuasive arguments that social movements play a crucial part in this process.

In the phase of democratic transition, which is defined here as the period of political consolidation following the removal of an authoritarian regime, new institutions and formal political platforms are negotiated. Drawing on Schmitter and O'Donnell, it is important to make a fundamental distinction between challenges to authoritarian regimes which lead to the expulsion of autocratic systems on the one hand and the installation of processes of democratic state-building in the same post-authoritarian settings on the other hand (O'Donnell, Guillermo and Schmitter, Philippe C, 1986, pp. 6-14). Although these are distinctive processes, Markowitz rightly criticised that both are 'persistently merged and confused' (Markowitz, 1999, pp. 42-71). The emphasis of this article is entirely on democratic state-building. With this clarification in mind, it helps to recognise that the literature on social movements in processes of democratisation is fairly limited. In fact, most works, including standard contributions by Schlumberger, Angrist and Posusney and Pratt focus on the opposition to authoritarian regimes (Pratt, 2007; Posusney, Marsha Pripstein; Angrist, Michele Penner, 2005; Schlumberger, Oliver, 2007). Although they talk about

processes of democratisation, their research is relatively concerned with movements of opposition to authoritarianism. Similarly, the literature on the role of social movements in democratisation processes is predominantly concerned with the challenges to authoritarian settings. This tendency is evident in recent works on the Arab Spring such as, for example, the works by della Porta, Abdelrahman or Gerges (Abdelrahman, 2015; della Porta, 2014; Gerges, Fawaz A., 2015). Little theorising is done however to consider the role of social movements as part of the new political set-up. Of course, considerable research exists on structural aspects of forming new political institutions and legal frameworks. Dahl in particular gave impetus to this debate (Dahl, 1971). Yet, apart from the long-lived classics by Michel and by Tarrow (Michels, 1962; Tarrow, 1994), the fact that many parties in post-authoritarian settings have roots in social movement organisations is widely overlooked. Exceptions, at least to an extent, are a few authors in Goldstone's *State, Parties and Social Movements*; the contributions of Glenn and van Dyke in particular can give us a comparative element to our investigation (Goldstone, Jack A., 2003). Still, a cursory survey of literature on the post-Arab Spring era show that the metamorphosis of social movements into political parties has been looked at neither in theoretical nor in empirical studies.

The paper focuses on social movements as the crucial building blocks for an evolving political order. It therefore builds on the theoretical groundwork of theorists such as Michel and Tarrow, but in addition to these works takes more recent debates in social movement theory into account. The works of Mc Adam et al, Della Porta and Diani and Goldstone need in particular to be noted (Goldstone, Jack A., 2003; McAdam, Doug; McCarthy, John D.; Zald, Mayer N., 1996). It adds a perspective to previous research which highlights that social movements are a key-element of an evolving party-system. As will be argued in this paper, the process of democratic consolidation is traceable in the development of boundaries between social movements and parties. As social movements and parties become subject to the process of transformation, their future place in either informal platforms or within formal institutions takes shape. Parallel to the establishment of a new system, social movements feed into the formation of new parties. In particular, the paper is interested in the mechanism of building democratic institutions and the role of social movements cum new parties herein. This leads us to engage with the dynamics of the transition of social movements into political parties in the course of post-authoritarian democratisation processes. Because the metamorphosis runs alongside the establishment of the new political systems, an analysis of mobilising structures can give us clues to the question of why the consolidation of social movements into democratic parties is frustrated in some instances, whilst in other cases it succeeds.

The Egyptian and Tunisian cases provide us with rich empirical references and useful points of comparison. In both instances social movements were central to ousting authoritarian leaders and moreover, in both cases core movements transitioned into political parties. While the democratisation process has largely failed in Egypt, Tunisia is still on course despite many setbacks and challenges. It is also significant that Islamist movements were leading actors, but also core subjects, in the processes of democratisation. Setting aside here the debate as to whether Islamist movements are able to accept democratic principles, it is remarkable that two organisations with similar religious-political frames are so dissimilar in their transitions into political parties. Beyond these points of comparison, the study of the Egyptian and the Tunisian cases throws up a set of initial observations. First, it is a fact that many social movements in Egypt as well as Tunisia remain firmly within the realm of 'the

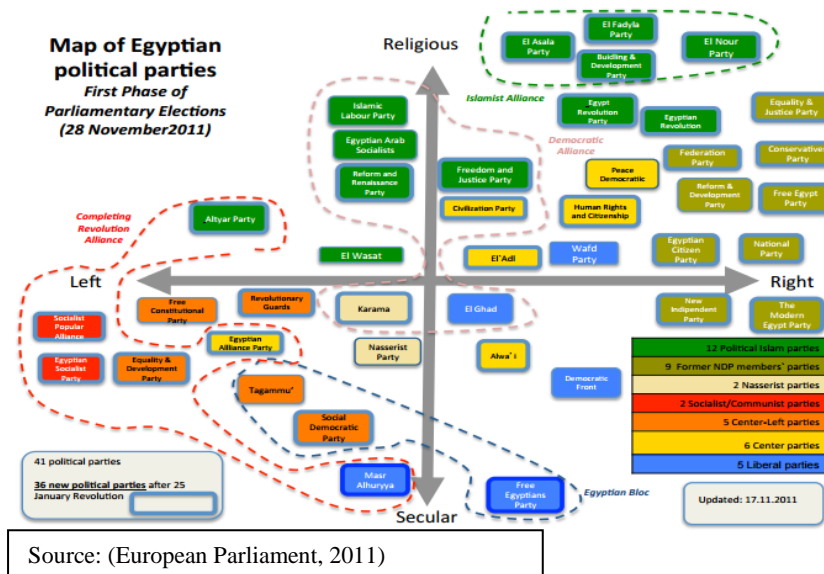
politics of contention'.¹ Because they do not formalise their own political activity, they limit their impact in the new system to the informal political sphere. Nevertheless, the events in Egypt in the summer of 2013 show that disenchanted social movements can exert immense pressure on the still fragile formal institutions by mobilising discontent through public protest (Elyacher, 2014). The mass-mobilisation against the Mursi government in Egypt is substantiation that marginalised parties can realign with protest movements. This observation then questions Michels's assumption that, once social movements implement formal structures and accordingly evolve into parties, they also adopt conservative tendencies and oligarchic structures which undermine their commitment to political change (Michels, 1962). Moreover, the same example illustrates that pro-democracy movements and parties can undermine the democratisation process, despite their objective of achieving democracy (Zollner, 2013). Second, social movements which decide to formalise their activities and thus transition to become parties undergo a process which runs parallel to that of democratic institution-building. It is this latter observation, which guides the theoretical and empirical debates of this article, to which we now turn.

Theorising about Democratic Transition: From Social Movement to Political Party

The establishment of political parties and the impact elections have on political transitions is, according to O'Donnell and Schmitter, a positive indication that there is a willingness to move towards democratic governance (O'Donnell, Guillermo and Schmitter, Philippe C, 1986). In the post-Arab Spring settings of Egypt and Tunisia, the formation of parties was seen as an important way-marker on the road to embedding a new political system (Tavana, 2013; Pickard, 2013). Despite the awareness that the transition processes remained delicate in policy circles, the freedom to form parties, regardless of whether these have Islamist, nationalist, socialist or communist influences, was seen as part and parcel of an evolving open and pluralistic party spectrum. If we take the openness of a political system as an indicator, particularly in terms of its latitude towards legalising new political parties, then

Egypt and Tunisia were well on their way to establishing democratic pluralism.

In the case of Egypt, numerous political parties were formed or gained legal recognition in the course of 2011. According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, over 80 parties were created across the political spectrum; at



¹ To be inserted: table which lists most important social movements and, if applicable, indicates their relationship to political parties.

least 50 of these were non-Islamists (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014). A table issued by the European Parliament offers an overview of the spectrum of parties and their ideological tendencies (European Parliament, 2011). Although the map is incomplete, it illustrates the fragmentation of Egypt's political scene.

This fragmentation found its reflection in the first parliamentary elections of 2011, when 35 parties competed through the party list in the 2011 parliamentary elections (High Judicial Elections Commission, 2011b). The MB's FJP emerged as the largest political party with 37.5% of votes, thus securing 235 seats (including 22 seats of parties which were part of the Democratic Alliance). The second largest party was the Nour Party which won 27.8%. Yet, Islamists won the majority of votes through the list of independent candidates (High Judicial Elections Commission, 2011). This fact is important to note as it evidences that secular parties overall attracted the majority of votes. Despite its overall strength, the secular trend was unable to capitalise on its popular support. The reason for this lies in the fact that the camp was highly fragmented along ideological lines. The gains were thus dispersed amongst an array of relatively small socialist, liberal and nationalist parties. A look at the Tunisian situation shows that a similar upsurge of new parties took place there. 110 new parties were registered in the course of 2011. In the first post-authoritarian election to the Constituent Assembly, 81 different political parties and many more independent candidates competed for seats (al-Jazeera English, 2011). As in Egypt, the majority of new parties had a secular background, ranging from nationalists and liberals to socialists. While the secular camp was fragmented, the Islamist party al-Nahda became the largest single party in the election of the Constituent Assembly in October 2011 with 37.04% of the overall votes. As only three other secular parties met the required threshold, the election secured al-Nahda 89 of 217 assembly seats. Effectively this meant that the Islamist party took 49% of all seats in the Constituent Assembly (Election Guide. Democracy Assistance and Elections News, 2011). If one judges purely on the basis of the numbers of the first elections and the range of parties which competed, a conclusion could easily be drawn that both countries were on track towards democratic transition. Yet, the fact that Egypt, despite its seemingly promising electoral landscape and its electoral optimism, did not adopt good governance clearly challenges O'Donnells and Schmitter's thesis.

The events after January and February 2011 put to the test the question of whether Islamist movements and, by implication, Islamist parties are compatible with democratic principles. Facing the inevitability of Islamist involvement in state-building, the overall tone changed in academic and policy circles. The focus of the debate now shifted towards the possibilities of and challenges to Islamist movements and parties (Lynch, Marc, 2011). Despite concerns about a possible dominance of Islamists in negotiations concerning a new state-system, think tanks such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Middle East Studies and Chatham House consented on the prospect that the Islamist political trend will play an important part in state-building. At the same time, facing pressures from internal and external political actors, core Islamist players, such as the MB and al-Nahda, recognised the need to strive for conciliation. In April 2011, the MB issued the constitutional document of the Freedom and Justice Party. Marking the occasion, the Murshid of the Brotherhood proudly declared that the FJP would be an independent civic party (Freedom and Justice Party, 2011). The establishment of the FJP, which was approved by Egyptian authorities in June 2011, was seen by commentators as an indicator of moderation within the Muslim Brotherhood which expressed itself in the institutionalisation of its political wing as a formal political party. The expectation was that, in time, the FJP would become autonomous from its 'mother-organisation'. Tunisia's al-Nahda also pushed for the recognition of its party and this was given legal recognition on the 24 September 2011. In acknowledgment of its origins as a

social movement, the party officially adopted the name ‘Harakat al-Nahda’ (Harakat al-Nahda, 2011). In both cases, the Islamist parties specified in their initial public declarations that they have the intent to work within the framework of a civic state. This in turn was regarded as an indicator that they were willing to actively contribute to democratic change. The institutionalisation of Islamist movements as parties thus stirred the hope that changes in political opportunities had led religious movements to moderate their political agenda and effectively to concede to secular realities.

But what do we actually mean by institutionalisation? It is a commonly used term which, as one would assume, gives an indication of the dynamics of the transition of a social movement into a political party, by explaining why parties develop out of social movements. Amongst those who have theorised on this topic is Tarrow who puts the development down to bureaucratisation (Tarrow, 1994). The reference echoes Weberian theory regarding the rationalisation of types of authority; it also reminds of Michels’s views (Michels, 1962). This position suggests that parties are the product of a ‘natural’ progression, during which social movements develop their mobilising structures which in turn enable them to progress into the sphere of formal politics. Offe takes this theory even further suggesting a sequence of stages along their path to institutionalisation. Social movements have to pass through these stages, thus assuming an ‘evolutionary’ progression from social movement to party (Offe, 1990). However, neither Tarrow nor Offe is clear on the finer details of the concept of institutionalisation. To get some clarity on the relationship between social movements and parties during democratic transition processes, we first need to get some clarity on the concept of institutionalisation.

It is, of course, correct that many parties have their roots in social movements. It is also obvious that many new parties are established during periods of democratic consolidation, i.e. phases when formal political systems undergo major changes. For Tarrow, democratic systems provide a framework which allows social movements to find their potential (Tarrow, 1994). By gaining access to formalised platforms and institutions, it gives them the opportunity to fully express their political positions. Similar views are expressed by Offe (Offe, 1990). These views imply that political parties are, in terms of their institutional evolution, a step ahead of social movements. However, if this position were correct, it would simply be logical to assume that the vast majority of social movements, particularly the most influential and best organised of them, evolve into political parties. This should be particularly the case in democratic systems where there are plenty of opportunities and few legal restrictions to block social movements from undertaking the transition to become political parties. Obviously, this is not the case. In fact, it seems that many social movements, including highly organised and established groups, deliberately opt to remain active in an informal setting. Della Porta and Diani make this point clear, stressing that most social movements in democratic systems do not attempt to form political parties, but instead attempt to influence politics through informal channels until their dissent is either heard and their demands are taken up by the existing party or the urgency of the protest fades (della Porta, Donnatella; Diani, Mario, 2006). This being the case, the concept of ‘natural progression’ as laid out by Michels, Tarrow and Offe is dented.

While there is undeniably evidence of the increase in the number of new parties in the course of processes of democratic transition, that rate clearly falls once political systems settle.² Overall, previous waves of democratisation, whether in Eastern Europe, South America or

² Table to follow.

Southern Europe, would seem to confirm that the rate of new parties is particularly high at the beginning of the democratisation process, but once a political system is in place, far fewer parties evolve. So, it is not the democratic system which encourages the institutionalisation of movements into parties, as suggested by Tarrow; rather it is the prospect of having immediate influence in state-building and development during the democratisation process. The prospect of entering into parliament or the constitution-writing assembly opens up a pathway for political influence. The fact that the number of new parties reaches a peak weeks before the first elections but then sharply declines once the prospects of entering the formal political forum narrow, is therefore an indicator that the driving reasons for the transition of social movements into political parties are power and opportunity. This reading of the transition also explains that if the results of elections do not deliver the anticipated results, many social movements recall their party projects and refocus on the politics of the street. These remarks point at a critique of the thesis that social movements naturally progress to political parties when a democratic setting is installed. Doowon aptly remarks that 'institutionalisation', or rather in this context the transformation of a social movement into a political party, is only one possible outcome in the process of democratic transition (Doowon, 2006). Yet, does this warrant that we dismiss the concept of institutionalisation altogether? If we hold on to the Egyptian and Tunisian examples of states in transition, we cannot deny that there is a close parallel between movement transformation and democratic transformation.

As a starting point we need to acknowledge that the concept of institutionalisation has little to do with the development of intra-organisational hierarchies and clear administrative structures. To illustrate this point clearly; if we look at the Muslim Brotherhood or al-Nahda, it is evident that the mobilising structures and organisational lines of command were highly evolved long before they established political parties. In fact, the MB established tight administrative structures during its history of opposition to the authoritarian regimes of Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak (Wickham, *The Muslim Brotherhood. Evolution of an Islamist Movement*, 2013). As I have argued elsewhere, its command and recruitment structures were highly efficient (Zollner, 2015). It made the organisation resilient to recurrent waves of persecution, whilst retaining its capacity to have optimal impact in a system where its pathways to be able to engage as a formal opposition were largely blocked. Arguably, the MB showed therefore a higher degree of bureaucratisation than most established political parties in Egypt. This is also the case for al-Nahda in Tunisia, with the slight difference that the movement was operating more like a party than a broad social movement. Unlike the MB in Egypt, which regarded welfare provisions, religious training and broader social grass-roots engagement as part of its remit; al-Nahda plainly had a political aim and accordingly used civil society platforms as its main stage (Bellin, 2013; Murphsy, 2011). The examples show that the concept of institutionalisation from movement to party can hardly be a reflection of the degree to which organisations are efficiently structured. Having implemented hierarchical structures, institutionalisation is therefore in reference to clear bureaucratic structures. Following from this, institutionalisation is not directly linked to the capacity to influence public policy or political decisions. However, the works of Tarrow and Offe seem to make exactly this inference by relating the concept to evolutionary progression. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that a party differs from a social movement; but this is thus not so much in terms of the organisational and administrative capacity of these structures.

Institutionalisation therefore can only be in reference to the degree to which a movement adapts its organisational format to the formal political setting, that is the formal institutional framework of a state-system. However, this position does not come without its own set of conceptual problems, one related to intra-organisational structures and the second related to the formal institutional framework (Michels, 1962). If we begin with the second issue, we

need to recognise that a formal institutional framework is only in the process of being developed and installed. Hence, it would be a mistake to equate institutionalisation with co-optation. Yet, this is a position Dawoon supports when explaining that the impetus behind a movement's transition to a political party lies in the drive to co-opt with the existing system (Doowon, 2006). He therefore makes a logical error, as this would suggest that formal institutional frameworks, to which social movements and new political parties can readily adapt, are already in place. This however cannot be the case in a phase of democratic transition, though it may be, at least to an extent, the case in that of 'liberalising' autocracies. Nevertheless, as stated above, a clear line needs to be drawn between phases of transitions which lead to the disintegration of autocratic powers on the one hand and processes of democratisation pursuant to this collapse on the other hand. In the latter case, the institutional framework is not at all settled. While the relationship is not causal, social movements qua those which establish new political parties evolve side by side and in close correlation to new democratic structures.

Taking the intra-organisational element of institutionalisation under closer scrutiny, it has already been mentioned that this is not a reflection of an organisation's administrative capacity to politically mobilise. As this is not the case, it must then be conditional on an organisation's formal recognition as a party. It is at this point that a social movement is elevated from activism in the informal sphere to pursuing its agenda in a formal setting. Although we have seen that neither numbers nor ideological pluralism can be regarded as a reliable indicator of whether the process of democratisation is on the right track, the legalisation of new political parties nevertheless constitutes a benchmark for the transition of social movements into political parties. In fact, the formal legal recognition signifies an important moment in a party's institutionalisation. Legal recognition requires a party to prove that its organisational framework represents the will of its constituency and that it is therefore 'independent' (Key, 1955).

The fuzziness of boundaries: between co-optation, parasitic relationship and symbiosis

Part of this institutionalisation is to leave characteristics behind, which are seen as fundamental to social movements (Michels, 1962). We need to remember that standard definitions for social movements, such as those given by Tilly, Mc Adam et al or by Diani, emphasise that these act in opposition to the state and that they differ essentially from those which formally participate in the political system (Tilly, *Social Movements and National Politics*, 1984; McAdam, Doug; McCarthy, John D.; Zald, Mayer N., 1996; della Porta, Donnatella; Diani, Mario, 2006). The transition from social movement to political party thus entails a fundamental redirection of the purpose of political participation and its organisational framework. This observation seems to support the commonly held position amongst social movement theorists that social movements are distinct from parties. In fact, the perception that there are clearly identifiable boundaries which set parties apart from social movements is seen as a fundamental indicator for their independence and for their role as formal institutions of governance which have a mandate to represent the people through parliament and government.

Although there is no doubt that, for pragmatic reasons, political parties are occasionally influenced by social movements; much speaks for the position that parties are necessarily different from social movements. Yet Goldstone throws into the discussion the view that the

boundaries between social movements and political parties are not at all that clear (Goldstone, 2003). He argues that the dividing lines between these are loose, permeable and indeed 'fuzzy'. Goldstone therefore goes against the dominant tendency. Both, he suggests, have overlapping aims in so far as they determine to influence politics. This makes a clear distinction between informal platforms and formal institutions somewhat difficult to draw. Although he focuses mainly on the inter-relationship between social movements and parties in established democracies, he goes on to state that the boundaries between the two are even indistinguishable during processes of democratisation (Goldstone, 2003).

The Egyptian and Tunisian cases seem to support Goldstone's assessment that there is a major overlap between social movement activity and the formal sphere of political parties during processes of democratic transition. Previous examples of states undergoing democratic transition, such as in post-communist Eastern Europe or the South-East Asian context, show that there are recognisable parallels (Desai, 2003; Glenn, 2003). While many social movements have made inroads in formal politics in authoritarian settings, many formally recognised parties in democratising states act more like an extension of social movements than as independent representatives of their constituency. Yet, this intersection between the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its FJP was not based on the conjoining of their structural elements. At least in legal terms, it appears that the profile of the Egyptian FJP was independent from the internal structures and the nomination processes of the Muslim Brotherhood (Jadiliyya and al-Ahram, 2011). According to the FJP's constitutional document, the Higher Council and the Executive Committee is elected by the party's General Assembly. FJP leaders also had to give up any seats in the Brotherhood's Guidance Council, Shura Council or any other 'official' body of the mother-organisation. At least outwardly then, the FJP fitted the profile of a democratic and independent party. Yet, the boundaries between the MB and FJP were in fact fictional. A closer look at the personal networks underpinning the MB and the FJP reveals that the newly established party did not, at least not primarily, represent a voting constituency, but rather the will of the 'mother-organisation' as embodied by the organisation's Guidance Council (Trager, 2011; Zollner, 2015). This relationship was maintained mainly through personal links, via the illusive 'pledge of allegiance' of leading FJP members to the MB leadership and due to the fact that the 'mother-organisation' pressed its members to join the party. The MB leadership used the tight command structure of the social movement to interlock itself with its party. Hence, despite the apparent independence of the FJP, it was the mother-organisation that shaped party policy, electoral mobilisation strategies and approved party candidates. Ergo, the FJP acted more like a lobby for MB interests.

In all, his observation that '...state institutions and parties are interpenetrated by social movements, often developing out of movements, in response to movements, or in close association with movements...' seems to be correct. Nevertheless, Goldstone's thesis throws up the fundamental question of whether the dissolution of boundaries between social movements and political parties is part of democratisation and hence signifies the transition towards a more open political system. If so, does this imply that the more these boundaries are blurred, the more likely it is that a democratic transition is successful? The Egyptian case would seem to tell us a different story however; although the post-Spring constellation showed a high degree of overlap between informal and formal politics, this could not be seen as a sign of successful democratisation. In reality, the new parties often remained an extension of social movements. The level of dependency of new parties on their 'mother-organisations' rendered them effectively mere lobby groups executing the agendas of the relevant social movements and their leaderships, rather than representing the will of the voting constituency.

The case of the MB epitomises this development. In effect, the FJP acted on behalf of a closed circle of MB leaders in the Guidance Council. Pulling the strings behind the scene, this unelected body of the MB imposed its socially, religiously and politically conservative vision, regarding the FJP merely as the political extension of the mother-organisation. This relationship between party and social movement reminds of Michels's view that, as part of the institutionalisation, an oligarchy dominates political decision-making processes (Michels, 1962). Of course, the dependency of the FJP on the MB had its benefits as the new party could rely on the MB's political legacy and moreover its mobilising capacity. The FJP's success in the ballots reflects this relationship (Zollner, 2015). The MB's grass-roots units were mobilised to drive the success of its FJP enterprise. Members of the MB were 'conscripted' to join street rallies, they volunteered in door to door campaigning and were drawn up to look after social media and website campaigning. This of course, gave the MB and its FJP an advantage over other newly created parties in terms of having an impact in certain constituencies around Egypt's urban areas. Moreover, the MB's tight command structure was used to pressure MB members to support the party (Trager, 2011). The control of the Guidance Council had the effect that the FJP was perfectly positioned in preparations for the parliamentary elections of 2011. Once the parliamentary elections had confirmed the FJP success, the MB Guidance Council took advantage of a strong presence in formal and informal platforms. Thus the elections were not only a victory for the FJP as it became the largest faction within parliament, it was moreover a triumph for the MB leadership. The favourable ballot gave the Guidance Council justification to continue its top-down socially and politically conservative policies. However, the MB control subsequently restricted the FJP's ability to act as 'a reconciler of interests' in negotiations with other parties about the emerging political structure of Egypt.

Contrasting Egypt's MB with Tunisia's al-Nahda, we can see that boundaries between social movements and evolving political parties are important for the survival and relative success of democratisation processes. Indeed, al-Nahda quite far along the road to transitioning to become an independent party long before the Arab Spring (Bellin, *Drivers of Democracy: Lessons from Tunisia*, 2013). Furthermore, al-Nahda acted through formal channels as an elected party; as such, it participated in negotiations with recognized and unrecognized political parties to press for political reform through established institutional avenues. Despite having won most seats in the first parliamentary elections, al-Nahda emphasized the need for cross-party consensus in constitutional negotiations and in running the transitional government (Bellin, 2013). In all, its political strategy was informed by the awareness that only a broad national alliance with its socialist counter-part as a partner in democratic transition could pre-empt attempts by the political elite to reinstall a regime not dissimilar of Ben Ali's. Although there were undoubtedly major differences between al-Nahda and secular parties, the final product was one of negotiated compromise. Its emphasis on political negotiation through formal structures can be evidenced in the prolonged constitution-writing process (Haugbølle, Rikke Hostrup and Cavatorta, Francesca, 2011). In sum, al-Nahda's commitment to the democratic process indicates that it acted as a representative party with the ability to reconcile diverging interests. As for the informal political platform, al-Nahda did not attempt to use its mobilising capacity to undercut formal political structures. In fact, its social movement activities became secondary to its party politics.

On reflection, the comparison between Egypt's MB and the Tunisia's al-Nahda proves that Goldstone's thesis needs to be qualified. His observation that the distinction between parties and social movements is blurred in established democracies is credible. The empirical evidence also shows that his supposition that they are even more indistinct during the process of democratisation is also correct. However, it is misleading to draw from this that the

processes of democratisation are fundamentally on course when we observe higher levels of overlap between social movements and subsidiary parties. In fact, it seems that just the opposite holds true. The clearer the boundaries between a social movement as mother-organisation and its progeny as political party, the more likely it is that the new party can hold to the legitimate pursuit of politics through formal political channels. This also means that it acts less as a lobby group for the social movement in question or, as in the case of the MB in Egypt, as the mouth-piece of a small unelected clique, but authentically as the representative of the electorate. Hence, the degree to which recognisable boundaries are installed is essential for the survival of democratic transition processes.

The transition of a social movement into a political party is not complete with the establishment of a political party. It is not finalized when the new party takes its seats in freshly established institutions nor even then when it forms the new government. It is only absolute when clear lines of demarcation between parties and the social movements of which they were delivered are established. Social movements need to withdraw from the formal institutional sphere and as such reverse the initial strategy that led them to use formal platforms to increase their influence and promote their agenda. In other words, the parties need to evolve into entities which are distinct from their social movement origins.

Conclusion: Transition from Authoritarianism and the Process of Democratisation

The comparison between the transition processes in Egypt and Tunisia shows that the numbers of newly established parties and the ideological range represented by these are poor indicators of whether democratic transition is or will ultimately be successful. Contrary to common wisdom in political science, party pluralism and political competition cannot authenticate, let alone assure, that democratic transition is on the right track. Granted, data available on the range of political parties which strive for representation in formal platforms can give us a hint as to whether frameworks which were previously governed by autocratic leaders are indeed opening up to ideas of democratic competition. However, in order to evaluate whether states are really experiencing a substantial change of direction, one needs to look more closely at the dynamics of the transition of social movements into political parties. This focal point calls for an investigation of two subsidiary issues. One deals with the institutionalisation of social movements, the other invites us to reflect on the boundaries which make social movements distinct from political parties.

The question of the institutionalisation of social movements leads us to examine the process whereby social movements formalise their organisational aims, thus integrating into an evolving formal state-system. As these social movements are no longer in opposition to the state, they become a main carrier of an evolving formal system and, in fact, shape the new system. However, there is the general assumption that the transition, both of social movements to parties but also of state-systems from the ejected authoritarian regime into democratising frameworks is 'natural' and 'evolutionary' (Michels, 1962; Tarrow, 1994; Offe, 1990). The empirical cases however demonstrate that the transformation from social movement to party is often flawed and incomplete. In fact, a major obstacle to successful democratisation occurs when the pre-existing structures of a social movement impede the development of the party as a sovereign construct independent of its 'mother-organisation'. For the same reason, the evolving state-system which depends heavily on newly formed 'independent' parties remains fragile. This paper therefore contends that the formation of

boundaries in newly established parties, i.e. clear internal structures and ideational independence from their social movement roots are all important in determining the success of democratic transition. In fact, they might be useful delineators in determining distinctions between authoritarian systems and democratic state-building. If we compare the Tunisian and Egyptian cases, we can observe that the transition from SM to political party progressed further in the case of al-Nahda than in the case of the FJP. In other words, social movements, at least those which take the step of formalising their political involvement to establish political parties, are themselves the subject of democratic transformation. Crucially, this transformation runs parallel to the formation of a new political system. Hence, it explains why neither the numbers of new parties nor the building of a new institutional framework can tell us much about how successful or indeed unsteady a process of democratisation is at state level.

Beyond the contribution made in this article, there is much room to revisit related debates. In particular, arguments as presented in this paper also have implications for the ‘participation-moderation hypothesis’ in so far as both new parties, but also social movements, need to re-define their role as political platforms in evolving democratic systems. As the Egyptian case clearly shows, there is no question that social movements are an alternative to formal platforms of opposition in authoritarian regimes, but it must be recognised that their power to mobilise ‘the street’ can effectively undermine the legitimacy of new formal institutions during the phase of democratic state-building. Furthermore, there is no doubt that political parties are an important building-block for establishing democratic systems, yet they can also fundamentally undermine the accomplishment of political representation. Hence, the debate as to whether the ‘moderation’ of social movements and political parties is a necessary element in the process of democratic transition needs to take place. Michels and Borneo offer opposing conclusions to this matter (Michels, 1962; Borneo, 1999). Certainly, the fact that the MB persisted with its ‘radical’ vision of social change, throws in question Michel’s position that the transition to political party leads to moderation because oligarchic elite structures have no interest in pursuing drastic changes. Borneo’s position is that democratisation does not necessarily require that social movements and new parties sacrifice their convictions on the altar of democratisation. However, she does not sufficiently recognise that both social movements and new political parties need to aspire to conciliate rather than confront. Conciliation though runs contrary to the fundamental features of both social movements and political parties. This is because social movements are defined by their opposition to the state; and as for parties, they seek to maximise their power through competition. The result of this is that states, during the process of transition, remain pre-disposed to intra-state instability.

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